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Chairman: Mr. Wolfe ..... (Jamaica)

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07-54200 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 63: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/62/38, 177, 202 and 290)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/62/173, 188 and 201)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/62/178)

1. **Mr. Kinyanjui** (Kenya) said that women were critical agents of change in development. In order to break the vicious cycle of gender inequality, poverty, discrimination and violence against women, therefore, his Government had embarked on a systematic process of re-engineering social attitudes to gender equality through political, legislative, administrative and policy measures. A comprehensive review of the Constitution had provided an opportunity to enshrine gender equality in the basic law. Moreover, to ensure the mainstreaming of gender issues, the Government had established the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services and the National Commission on Gender and Development. Gender officers had been appointed to senior posts in ministries and other bodies to ensure the integration of gender perspectives in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of all development policies and programmes. Provision had also been made for women's rights organizations to nominate representatives for various commissions and boards. One third of all new appointments in the public service had been reserved for women.

2. Violence against women was abhorrent in all its manifestations. Not only did it abrogate the human rights of its victims, but a society in which such violence was tolerated could not optimize its potential for development. The Government had therefore enacted the Sexual Offences Act of 2006, which increased the penalties for rape and defilement. The Public Officer Ethics Act of 2003 prohibited sexual harassment in the workplace. The Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Bill had come before Parliament. The Children's Act of 2001 outlawed female genital mutilation and child marriages. The Government, civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had been engaged in raising awareness about the dangers of the former and administrative measures had been taken to stamp out both practices in communities where they were prevalent. A gender-specific police station had been set up in Nairobi to deal with women and children victims of violence, and gender desks had been established in police stations throughout the country. A special anti-trafficking police unit had also been set up.

3. In Kenya, 80 per cent of women lived rural areas and comprised 70 per cent of all employees in the agricultural sector. Yet, owing to customary practices, the ownership of land was almost exclusively vested in men. A national land policy had therefore been drafted, recommending that all laws, regulations, customs and practices that discriminated against women in land ownership should be outlawed. The Government had also established a women's enterprise fund, to which it had allocated KSh 2 billion in the current financial year to provide credit for women entrepreneurs.

4. **Mr. Mansour** (Tunisia) said that, despite all efforts, women regrettably still suffered from poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, pandemics and other constraints, not to mention discrimination, violence and trafficking. In particular, action must be taken to put an end to violence against women, which constituted not only a danger for the female gender but a denial of human dignity. His delegation therefore welcomed the multi-year system-wide campaign proposed by the Secretary-General to eliminate violence against women and girls.

5. The development process could not succeed in any country without the active participation of women and their direct involvement in the implementation of social, economic or political programmes. Since independence in 1956, Tunisia had shown its willingness to embrace the modern world, while retaining its traditional character. From the outset, however, it had been necessary to tackle a number of social taboos; a society in thrall to old traditions could not develop a development process worthy of the name. Thus August 1956 had seen the adoption of the Personal Status Code, which had outlawed polygamy and repudiation and introduced legal divorce. In other words, the archaic model, which had enshrined women's inferiority and flagrant sexual discrimination, had been replaced by a system under which women were equal partners. The effect of integrating women into political, economic, social and cultural development had been that Tunisia had become an open, moderate and balanced society. Various plans of action had resulted in the progressive emancipation of

women. Campaigns to tackle illiteracy, encourage birth control and introduce universal education had ultimately resulted in the gender mainstreaming of development plans and professional training. Women had achieved success as doctors, lawyers, judges, ministers, mayors or managing directors.

6. Women had come to be seen as a determining factor in the country's economic development, its social cohesion and its political stability. Access to employment remained one of the most effective measures to enhance women's economic independence and establish real equality between the sexes. In 2006, women had exceeded 25 per cent of the active population in Tunisia. The establishment of mechanisms providing women with access to sources of funding, including microcredits, had enabled them to make an effective contribution to the economy. Women should, however, be more closely involved in the information society. He urged the international community to recognize the value of information and communication technologies as a motor not only of development but also of the full integration of women into society.

7. **Mr. Park** Hee-Kwon (Republic of Korea) said that the empowerment of women would contribute not only to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but to the promotion of world peace and security. His delegation therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to spearhead a multi-year system-wide campaign to eliminate violence against women and girls. It also commended the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the "Stop Rape Now" campaign. Systematic rape and sexual slavery were not only the most egregious forms of human rights violations but also war crimes and, in some circumstances, crimes against humanity. Every effort must be made to prevent such atrocities and put an end to impunity. One way of doing so was to raise public awareness by promoting human rights education and ensuring the accuracy of accounts of historical events in educational curricula.

8. The gender perspective should be fully integrated in the United Nations system. The current structure of the Organization was, however, not adequate to that purpose. Strong leadership and coordination were needed. His delegation supported a new gender architecture which would unite normative and programme activities under a coherent mechanism, headed by an Under-Secretary-General. His delegation also commended the resolutions adopted at the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women on ending female genital mutilation and forced marriage of the girl child.

9. His Government had taken comprehensive measures to achieve the advancement of women. Remarkable progress had been made in attaining gender equality in the country's laws and institutions. The family headship system, which had enshrined legal discrimination against women, had been abolished. It had thus been possible for his Government to pursue the withdrawal of its reservation to 16, paragraph 1 (g), of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In pursuit of its commitment to gender mainstreaming, the Government had undertaken an analysis of the impact of gender on policy in central and local government, and the Statistical Act provided that gender-disaggregated data were a prerequisite for the approval of statistical data. In accordance with the National Fiscal Act of 2006, a gender-sensitive budget policy would come into effect in 2010. As for the participation of women in the decision-making process, significant progress had been made with the appointment in recent years of the first female prime minister and the first female minister of justice. The ratio of women representatives in the National Assembly had increased dramatically.

10. There had been a sharp rise in international marriages in the Republic of Korea. Such a situation presented new chalienges, and efforts were being made to devise ways of protecting and supporting foreign wives. In 2006, the Government had established the Policy for Social Integration of Families with Migrant Women, in which the representatives of 12 ministries participated. A programme had also been launched, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to help female immigrants adapt to the Korean language and culture prior to their marriage.

11. **Mr. Christian** (Ghana) said that, after years of extensive consultation with all segments of Ghanaian society, the Domestic Violence Bill had passed into law in February 2007, marking another milestone in the Government's commitment to respect for human rights, and specifically the rights of women. The Ghana Police Service had set up domestic violence and victim support units throughout the country. Measures had

also been taken to ensure gender sensitivity in sectoral plans and programmes.

12. Rural women constituted 47 per cent of the farm labour force. The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy estimated that food-crop farmers, of whom women constituted 55 per cent to 60 per cent, were the worst hit by poverty. The Government had taken measures to address the problem by providing credit facilities, improved technological services and skills upgrading in management and finance. Thanks to the micro- and small credit loans scheme, 70,000 women had received a total of some US$ 4 million worth of microcredit. The Ministry of Education had organized night schools to make rural women functionally literate. It had also initiated a drive to encourage school enrolment for girls; a school-feeding programme introduced in 2006 had increased primary school enrolment, especially among girls in rural areas.

13. Discussions were under way on the abolition of outmoded customary practices that prevented women from owning or acquiring land. A dialogue was also continuing with the traditional authorities on the mainstreaming of gender into the Land Administration Project, which sought to reform the land tenure system. The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs had initiated a bill to facilitate the registration of property by women.

14. Reproductive health services had been integrated into the general health-care system. As a result of that and other policies, such as free antenatal, delivery and post-natal care, women had been introduced to family planning and seen an overall improvement in their health. Other improvements had resulted from the introduction of the national health insurance scheme and the community-based health planning services.

15. A recent survey conducted by the Ghana Statistical Survey indicated that poverty had diminished considerably in rural areas. The proportion of the population living on the breadline had fallen from 50 per cent in 1991 to 39.5 per cent in 1998 and 28.5 per cent in 2005. It was hoped that the downward trend would continue.

16. Informal observations indicated that literacy programmes and legislation had also resulted in impressive reductions in female genital mutilations, discrimination against widows, violence against women, ritual slavery and trafficking in women and children. With regard to gender-based violence in situations of conflict, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, an alarming upward trend had been noted. Although several United Nations peace support operations were mandated to monitor human rights violations, there needed to be complementary capacity and leadership in the field and at Headquarters to ensure accountability for implementing such mandates. The Security Council should develop a mechanism to ensure the systematic implementation of its resolution 1325 (2000), the adoption of which had constituted a groundbreaking step towards women's advancement.

17. **Ms. Medal** (Nicaragua) said that, since the Sandinista revolution in 1979, women had played an increasingly important role in Nicaragua. The Government had set a target of 50 per cent participation by women during its term of office. Equality between men and women was enshrined in the Constitution, as was the States' obligation to remove obstacles to such equality in practice or to active participation in political, economic and social life. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been incorporated into Nicaraguan law, and the country had recently submitted its sixth yearly report under the Convention. The Government had set itself the objective of ensuring equality between the sexes by means of a vigorous gender policy, under which affirmative action would be taken to encourage women's participation in industry and public administration. The policy placed an equal value on the skills of women and men; it was impartial in promoting participation by both sexes in senior posts and in training for further qualifications. It also advocated equal pay for equal work.

18. The Zero Hunger programme aimed to eliminate poverty, particularly among women, who were the drivers of economic development within their families and within society generally. Low-interest microcredit and agricultural machinery acquired thanks to agreements reached with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had gone to cooperatives led by women.

19. The Policy for the Promotion of Employment and Decent Work aimed at improving the efficiency of the labour market and achieving decent working conditions in respect of the minimum wage, social security, health and safety at work, labour migration and the productive use of remittances, the channelling of social expenditure into poverty reduction, compliance with basic rights at work and strengthening of social dialogue. The economic empowerment of women had

also been given impetus by the Women and Local Economic Development Project. As far as working conditions were concerned, it had been found that globalization had given rise to atypical forms of employment frequently associated with precarious employment conditions. In order to establish the effect of economic restructuring on women's lives, an inquiry had been held into the flexibility of the labour market so as to establish precisely the challenges that Nicaragua faced.

20. Other achievements included the appointment of the Ombudsman for Women, within the office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, with the task of developing procedures to empower women and promoting the exercise of democracy. There were five women ministers in the Government and about 60 organizations engaged in promoting and protecting women's rights and campaigning for their interests. Mention should also be made of the success achieved by the National Police, which, headed by a woman First Commissioner, had incorporated a cross-cutting gender focus in the modernization of the police.

21. Nicaragua had a national plan for the prevention of domestic or sexual violence, run by the National Commission to Combat Violence against Women, Children and Youth. The Government laid particular emphasis on the importance of recognizing, without discrimination, the fundamental rights of indigenous women and women of African descent.

22. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia) said that inequality in many societies, including Namibia's, could best be addressed through gender empowerment programmes. Accordingly, his Government promoted entrepreneurial skills and employment opportunities for women and provided infrastructure to improve the marketing of rural women's produce. A higher standard of living for women would reduce the country's Geni coefficient, which was among the highest in the world, and thereby transform Namibian society. His delegation appealed to Namibia's development partners to increase their support for such programmes and called on the private sector to view women as local partners in investment ventures.

23. As a result of the advancement of women in politics and social affairs in the late twentieth century, many women currently occupied strategic positions in Governments and in the private sector. In Africa, a woman had been elected president and several women held ministerial posts. His own country had produced a deputy prime minister and several key ministers. Yet much remained to be done in order to attain a leadership composition commensurate with women's numerical and qualitative strength. In fact, a new political culture of openness, tolerance and accountability was necessary.

24. Gender-based violence, an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace, impaired the enjoyment of women's fundamental human rights. In the case of Namibia, the relevant statistics showed that the efforts to address the phenomenon left much to be desired. The "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence (25 November-10 December 2007)" preceding the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women should have a lasting effect. Men's participation in the effort to curb gender-based violence could be effective in overcoming the existing gender imbalances and inequalities. United Nations bodies should ensure that Member States met their commitments in that area, facilitated the sharing of relevant experience, assisted in mobilizing resources and led by example through greater use of women's knowledge and expertise at senior posts in the United Nations system.

25. **Ms. Bungudu** (Nigeria) said that, since the landmark Beijing Platform for Action adopted in 1995, global efforts had been made to narrow the gender gap. However, persisting challenges included unequal access to productive resources, gender bias in laws on property and inheritance, women's inadequate access to education, unequal distribution of resources within the family, violence and discrimination against women and women's insufficient participation in decision-making.

26. The Nigerian Government had taken steps to improve conditions for women. National bodies promoting entrepreneurial development through the social and economic empowerment of women included the agency implementing the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP). SMEDAN focused on rural women and NAPTIP consistently served as a deterrent to trafficking in human beings.

27. The Government's bold steps to ensure women's participation in development had resulted in the adoption of a national gender policy framework. An executive bill proposing the incorporation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women into Nigerian law had been placed before the National Assembly. The Government had increased women's participation in the Federal Executive Council from 8.2 per cent to 19.2 per cent. Women headed the Ministries of Finance, Foreign Affairs and the Environment, the Civil Service of the Federation and various key committees in the National Assembly, where women's representation had increased. Moreover, the chief executives of the Nigeria Stock Exchange, the Federal Inland Revenue Service, the Governing Board of Nigerian Banks, the Bureau of Public Enterprises and the Millennium Development Goals Office in Nigeria were women.

28. Nigeria's ongoing educational reforms focused on promoting the education of the girl child by raising the enrolment and retention rates for girls in the rural areas through enhanced education infrastructure and special incentives for girl child education. In the area of violence against women, the Government collaborated closely with law enforcement agencies and had set up a temporary shelter for women victims of violence.

29. **Mr. Jang Hun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his Government had promulgated the law on equality of men and women in 1946 and liberated women from all types of social inequality and discrimination, ensuring that women participated in politics, the economy, culture and social life on an equal footing with men and perfecting policies to guarantee women's rights. Women were highly regarded and were considered the driving force for one half of the revolution and a valuable asset. They could develop their talents and fulfil their aspirations in all areas of social life. As a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea made every effort to fulfil in good faith its international obligations regarding the protection and promotion of the human rights of women.

30. Although the Japanese imperial army had violated women's human rights by forcibly drafting 200,000 women from Korea and several other Asian countries as "comfort women", the current Japanese authorities refused to make amends for that crime, which had constituted one of the biggest human trafficking and human rights violations in the twentieth century. The Japanese authorities were even trying to strike that fact off history textbooks. More than half a century after the war, the survivors of that crime and the souls of its victims appealed to the conscience of mankind to ensure that such atrocities should never happen again. The Japanese authorities should accept responsibility for the "comfort women" issue and fulfil their obligations accordingly.

31. **Mr. Emadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that women faced various manifestations of violence, ranging from trafficking, domestic violence, discrimination and sexual abuse to situations arising from foreign occupation and armed conflict. In many parts of the world, women were trapped in a cycle of poverty that bred violence. Dealing with those issues, particularly the need for poverty eradication, should be a top priority for collective effort.

32. The policy implemented by the Islamic Republic of Iran with a view to improving the status of Iranian women and broadening their roles to ensure their active participation in the country's economic and social development was guided by the principle of gender justice in education, health, employment and politics. Currently, women accounted for more than 30 per cent of the national labour force — a proportion that had increased by 2.6 per cent since 1996. Women's rate of participation in the economy had reached 14 per cent, a national record. Moreover, women's literacy rate had increased from 25 per cent in 1976 to 76 per cent in 1997 and 78 per cent in 2007. In recent years, more female than male applicants had been accepted into universities. Iranian women's participation in social and political affairs had considerably increased in 10 years. Currently, more than 20 groups and parties were active in women's affairs, while nine NGOs dealing with women's human rights enjoyed consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. Lastly, networking and partnership capacity-building activities had been launched in order to promote women's participation in Government, Parliament and local administration.

33. **Ms. Ng Li San** (Singapore) said that Singapore was a small nation with no natural resources; human capital was its only asset and women were an integral part of that capital. Since education was fundamental to individual development, the Government had always been committed to providing boys and girls with equal

access to education. At a time when traditional attitudes about female roles had predominated, primary education had been made compulsory for all and secondary education made more easily accessible. Even in tertiary education, female students had never been handicapped or discouraged. In 2006, women had comprised almost half the student population in tertiary education.

34. Education had paved the way for women to seek gainful and fulfilling employment, and their aspirations had risen correspondingly. Women were making huge inroads into leadership positions in the public, private and non-profit-making sectors. Such advances had also, however, brought challenges. For example, women contributed almost half the income of two-income households, with the result that married couples often found it difficult to strike a balance between work and family. One manifestation of that was falling birth rates. With promising careers and financial independence, more women were staying single or marrying later. Such choices had to be made by individuals, but there were serious implications and the Government had set up an interministerial committee, chaired by a deputy prime minister, to encourage marriage and parenthood. Ultimately, however, Singapore couples would have to make their own decisions.

35. **Ms. Amin** (Ethiopia) said that, as 85 per cent of the Ethiopian population lived in rural areas, her Government gave priority to rural development. In particular, policies and strategies were aimed at sustainable development and poverty eradication through multifaceted rural development action. In that context and in conformity with General Assembly resolution 60/138, improving the life of women in Ethiopia, especially those living in the rural areas, was one of the major responsibilities of the country's federal and regional authorities.

36. Government policies and strategies had been drawn up with a view to gender mainstreaming in the economic, social and political areas. The Ministry of Women's Affairs monitored the overall implementation of such policies. Women's affairs bureaux in all regional states carried out activities at the grass-roots level. In all sector ministries, women's affairs offices were responsible for ensuring gender equality and empowerment in their respective institutions and supporting related national efforts. A new criminal code providing for broader women's rights and protection had been enacted and was enforced. Legislation ensuring women's access to land, credit facilities and other economic resources had been promulgated. A health extension worker programme had been launched in a bid to reduce the number of maternal deaths nationwide. The Ethiopian Government took practical measures to reduce violence against women, particularly through the enactment of appropriate legislation and the implementation of effective enforcement mechanisms, and had integrated women's issues in a five-year development strategy aimed at eradicating poverty (PASDEP). The result had been increases in access to health services, girls' enrolment in primary school and the scope of HIV treatment and a significant decline in the maternal mortality rate.

37. Although still inadequate, the number of women holding Government and public administration posts had increased at all levels. Generally speaking, the challenges faced by women were due to insufficient human resources, lack of awareness of the impact of harmful traditional practices and inadequate capacity and resources to enforce the law and implement the strategies adopted. Accordingly, a coordinated approach by national and international actors was crucial to achieving women's empowerment and emancipation.

38. **Ms. Grabianowska** (Poland) said that, while it supported the statement made by Portugal on behalf of the European Union, her delegation wished to declare that any reference in that statement to the sexual and reproductive rights of women did not constitute an encouragement of the promotion of abortion as a means of achieving the advancement of women. Poland, fully committed to the advancement of women, looked forward to working with the Committee and other delegations to achieve that goal.

39. **Mr. Cherkaoui** (Morocco) said that Moroccan women had always played a leading role in the country's political, social and economic life. Currently, the Government included seven women, while there were 34 female members of Parliament. Women were also active in civil society and NGOs. A royal committee had been set up to ensure that all stakeholders would cooperate to implement a reform adopted by Parliament in 2004. That reform had established the principle of gender equality, men's and women's joint responsibility for the family, the possibility for a woman to get married without her

father's or custodian's permission, 18 as a standard minimum age for marriage and divorce through mutual consent. Moreover, the reform had provided for drastic restrictions on polygamy, such as a judge's prior authorization and a marriage contract clause in which the husband could commit to not taking another wife. Under the same rules, either husband or wife could sue for divorce, while common assets could be split between the divorcing spouses. In 2007, a reform of the Nationality Code had enabled Moroccan mothers married to foreigners to pass on their Moroccan nationality to their children.

40. Harmonization of Moroccan legislation with international instruments was a priority for Morocco. Legislation on prisons contained specific provisions guaranteeing women's integrity and rights. A Criminal Code reform had reinforced protection for women and children by prohibiting trafficking, prostitution and pornography involving children, sexual harassment and all forms of gender-based discrimination. There was further need for the implementation of comprehensive gender-related strategies, such as a national strategy for gender equality and gender mainstreaming adopted in 2006, the strategy for eliminating violence against women and the operational plan for its implementation. Structures set up to help women and girls who were victims of violence included a national hotline for specialized counselling services and legal, medical and psychological assistance; and a national observatory for combating violence against women. The Mohammed V Foundation played an active role in supporting activities for rural women and the girl child.

41. **Ms. Sulimani** (Sierra Leone) said that despite a number of constraints attributable to the weak overall economic and social development of the country and the impact of a civil war, Sierra Leone had been trying to fulfil its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Sierra Leone had presented its combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report during the thirty-eighth session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, with the financial and technical support of development partners, especially from United Nations sources such as the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the country team in Sierra Leone.

42. Since ratifying the Convention in 1988, the Government had established the Women's Bureau to coordinate issues relating to women, and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, which served as the national machinery responsible for promoting the advancement and empowerment of women. Practical measures had also included the incorporation of the Convention into legislation, legal reform and the adoption of a twin policy on gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women, and steps had been taken to encourage the wider participation of women in decision-making processes. Gender parity in education had been eliminated through the adoption of affirmative action measures.

43. Sierra Leone's report had been commended for being informative and candid, and the efforts made by the Government, among others, in signing the Optional Protocol, revising discriminatory legal provisions and enacting new legislation on gender issues and human trafficking had been praised. Moreover, the Government had made strides in addressing the areas of concern raised by the Committee in its recommendations, and had moved swiftly to enact laws that ensured further protection of the rights of women, especially in rural areas. Issues such as violence against women, inheritance of property and forced marriages had also been addressed. Nonetheless, since Sierra Leone had recently held general elections, the Government hoped to embark on the adoption of more proactive measures under the current minister responsible for gender issues.

44. Sierra Leone was fully committed to the implementation of the Convention and other relevant human rights instruments. The new administration was committed to improving the delivery of health-care services to women and children and especially to the reduction of infant and maternal mortality. While the success of the Government depended first and foremost on its own efforts, the support of development partners was also crucial. In that regard, she appealed to the international community to support Sierra Leone in pursuing its obligations and commitment to the cause of the women of Sierra Leone.

45. **Ms. Gallardo Hernández** (El Salvador) said that in keeping with the belief that women were inherent to the national development process, the Government of El Salvador had accorded high priority to a strategy focusing on gender equity and the strengthening of the national machinery responsible for the coordination,

evaluation and supervision of the implementation of the national policy on women. That policy had been formulated in response to an appeal for Member States to provide systematic, full, multisectoral and sustained leadership in promoting the advancement of women in urban and rural areas. Her Government believed that reaching the Millennium Development Goals should not only be a quantitative achievement, but should also lay the foundation for social processes that provided a life of dignity and social harmony, based on the principle of gender equality in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

46. El Salvador had taken firm action to follow up the implementation of its obligations under the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Belem do Pará Convention, and the high level of political commitment to the advancement of women was evidenced by the fact that the First Lady of the Republic of El Salvador headed the main body responsible for the development of women. The Government had also doubled the budget allocated to promotion of the policy on women.

47. El Salvador sought to ensure that women were offered education of high quality and of a non-sexist nature, providing them with marketable skills and equal access to the labour market. Microcredit and microfinance initiatives and the encouragement of entrepreneurial capacity were therefore regarded as important tools for the empowerment of Salvadorian women. The establishment of production and training centres for women had greatly enhanced their socio-economic status.

48. Under the national policy on women and the 2005-2009 plan of action, various governmental and NGO stakeholders and local women's organizations had joined efforts in fostering equality and women's participation at all levels of society, and had taken relevant legislative steps to prevent and eradicate violence against women.

49. **Ms. Maierá** (Brazil) said that the advancement of women was an integral part of her Government's national policies and programmes in the areas of human rights, social inclusion and development. The establishment of a special secretariat had paved the way for a set of normative and institutional initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. The internationally agreed platforms for action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had provided indispensable guidance for Brazil's action at the national and regional levels.

50. Brazil was an emerging developing country with an unequal distribution of income, uneven development and radical contradictions. In the implementation of international instruments, the complexities and uniqueness of Brazilian society formed a conceptual foundation for the work of the Government. The first national plan of policies for women, adopted in 2004, had set the basic principles for the design and implementation of national programmes aimed at the advancement of women. Outlining recent achievements and priority areas, she said that the promotion of the human rights of women was closely connected to the development agenda and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Gender equality and empowerment were also essential elements in combating hunger and poverty and achieving sustainable development.

51. Principles were translated into concrete measures in different settings. In schools, for example, policies had been formulated to encourage non-discriminatory practices, respect for diversity, including sexual orientation, and in stimulating the interest of girls in non-traditional disciplines. In the workplace, national policies were aimed at eliminating discriminatory barriers to access, salaries, promotions and permanence in jobs. Access to sexual and reproductive health services remained a critical element, and the Government was especially concerned at the growing trend towards the feminization of sexually transmitted diseases, in particular, HIV/AIDS. The increasing vulnerability of women had called for a specific programme for improving access to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

52. Brazil was also committed to the protection and promotion of the rights of rural and indigenous workers. The particular situation of women of African descent had attracted special attention as that group faced discrimination on the basis of both gender and ethnicity. Concerning violence against women, Brazil had participated actively in the operation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, a regional instrument that was considered a model for treaties on violence against women. The Convention had inspired a federal law to eliminate violence against women and

to impose stiffer penalties for such violence. The innovative aspects of the new legislation recognized the central role of civil society in preventing domestic violence and providing care for victims. It had also been the first federal law to include a reference to "sexual orientation".

53. The Government was strongly committed to combating trafficking in women and girls. A national plan for combating human trafficking had been devised to build capacity in the local public services, with the help of the education and social work sectors.

54. Brazil attached particular importance to the sharing of good practices and coordination among States, especially at the regional level. At the international level, Brazil appreciated the work of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in assisting developing countries to overcome structural and circumstantial difficulties in the area of the advancement of women. In that regard, she made specific reference to the work of UNIFEM and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

55. **Ms. von Lillien** (International Fund for Agricultural Development) said that there was growing recognition among development practitioners of the need to maximize the impact of development programmes through gender mainstreaming. Significant progress had been made in integrating gender into agricultural research. However, the pivotal role of women in food production was still not adequately reflected in many national agricultural policies or agricultural development programmes and projects.

56. In order to promote gender mainstreaming, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), along with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank, was preparing a "Gender in Livelihoods (GAL) Sourcebook", to help practitioners integrate gender analysis and pro-poor approaches into sector-based programmes and projects. Rural livelihoods in specific rural subsectors, concepts such as assets, extension, markets, risks and vulnerability, were among the range of issues covered. In the course of preparing the Sourcebook, a number of gaps had been identified: although gender activities had been clustered around microfinance, little was known about the role of women in the larger rural finance sector. The concerns of women were rarely taken into account when it came to investment in infrastructure development and differentiation between women farmers' tasks and those of their male counterparts, and women were at a clear disadvantage in terms of access to extension services, new technologies, information and decision-making powers.

57. The report of the Secretary-General (A/62/202) had shown that little information was available on the extent to which women in rural areas could influence the design and implementation of development programmes and policies. One of the key concerns of IFAD was to give rural women a voice in decisions that affected their lives and future prospects. To that end, the Fund was engaged in strengthening rural women's organizations, training and education, and in providing access to market information and production support services. Capacity and institution-building in poor communities was crucial in helping the populations of those communities to claim their rights and counter the risks associated with extreme poverty.

58. IFAD had learned that activities designed to improve the economic status of women and their organizational and decision-making capacities were most successful when such action was complemented by investments in the water supply, health care and literacy, since those services gave women the time, energy and know-how necessary to participate actively in the economic, social and political spheres. In order to fully realize the Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction, the development community should work within the agenda set by rural women themselves.

59. At the international level, further effort should be made to include rural women in important policy discussions. Through its grants programme, IFAD was supporting farmers' organizations, with equal representation of women and men, and had introduced a farmers' forum at its Governing Board. Specific attention should be paid to the role of rural women at the next session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, in which focus was expected to be placed on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa.

60. **Mr. Buff** (International Committee of the Red Cross) said that greater effort was required to raise awareness on the plight of women affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence and to improve respect for international humanitarian law. Women must be protected against the dangers arising from the

conduct of hostilities, and should be able to live without fear of unlawful killing, ill-treatment, trafficking or abduction.

61. Although women were resilient, situations of violence exposed them to the same physical threats as the community as a whole, in addition to sexual violence, which was gender-specific. Rape and other forms of sexual violence in wartime were serious violations of fundamental rules protecting people in situations of violence and constituted war crimes when perpetrated against persons protected under international humanitarian law. The consequences of such crimes had lasting repercussions for women, beyond the physical trauma, and for societies, especially in instances where the integrity of communities and families was bound to the "virtue" of their women. Sexual violence was preventable. It was therefore incumbent on States and other actors to enforce the rules prohibiting such violence. In that regard, he was pleased to note recent developments at the national and international level to end impunity for perpetrators of violations against women. There must be continued efforts to prevent such violations and to provide adequate assistance to their victims.

62. Displacement also compounded the risk factors facing women during periods of armed conflict, particularly when they were responsible for the survival of their families. Appropriate assistance that took the needs of women heads of household into account could reduce the specific risks they faced when they tried to secure income, food and other scarce provisions during displacement. ICRC tried to ensure that its humanitarian programmes and activities took their specific needs and perspectives into account and enabled them to become self-sufficient.

63. In post-conflict situations, women with missing relatives experienced the psychological anguish of not knowing the fate of their loved ones and of not being able to complete the grieving process. Another aspect that was often overlooked was the lack of official acknowledgement of the status of missing persons. In the case of missing spouses, the women themselves had no clear legal status, which affected their rights to property, inheritance, guardianship and their prospects of remarriage and entitlement to benefits. ICRC provided material assistance and support throughout the administrative procedures involved in applying for financial support or legal advice. It also supported psychological workshops for families of missing persons and sensitized the authorities and other bodies on the need to support those families. No effort should be spared in preventing disappearances and elucidating the fate of the missing as quickly as possible, and States should acknowledge the situation of the wives of missing persons in their laws and provide them with the necessary assistance.

64. **Mr. Omar** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that in spite of the many positive international agreements, conferences and summits, there was still widespread and serious discrimination against women in the social, cultural, political and economic spheres. Problems such as violence, inequality in inheritance and property rights, the digital divide along gender lines, HIV/AIDS and climate change took a heavy toll on women, particularly rural women, and increased poverty and food insecurity. Implementation of a successful rural and agricultural policy required that development strategies should take social factors into account.

65. Seventy-five per cent of the world's poor lived in rural areas, and rural women represented half of that population. They depended on agriculture and related rural crafts, trade and services for their livelihoods. The role of women in agriculture, fisheries and forestry and their immeasurable contribution to household and national food security must be given urgent attention.

66. FAO focused on capacity-building and would continue to assist Member States in formulating appropriate national action and policies for the attainment of their goals, fulfilment of their commitments, and reducing gender disparities in access to, and control over, productive resources and services. FAO also helped States to adopt a gender perspective in confronting the problems related to property rights, rural poverty, food security, HIV/AIDS transmission and the development of adaptation practices in response to climate change.

67. Close collaboration among actors at all levels was crucial to creating an enabling social environment. FAO was fully committed to responding, within its mandate, to the challenges posed by social and economic factors, and was ready to establish partnerships for effectively promoting the advancement of rural women and gender equality as a means of combating hunger and poverty. He drew attention to the theme of the 2007 World Food Day, *Right to Food*, which sought to highlight the right to food and

continuous access to production resources and the right to an income for the purchase of adequate food.

68. **Ms. Dhjacta** (United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)) said that UN-Habitat supported the report of the Secretary-General on the measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and the Outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/62/178). Sustainable urbanization was one of the most pressing challenges facing the international community. Women and men experienced urban life differently. Inequalities in access to basic services such as water, sanitation and housing had resulted in extreme forms of urban poverty. Women did not have the same access as men to resources such as land, credit and technologies. Women and their children were vulnerable to urban crime and were particularly affected during evictions, disasters and conflicts. Women continued to migrate from rural to urban areas in search of employment. They were increasingly becoming victims of human trafficking and various forms of violence.

69. The "Safer Cities" programmes promoted deeper understanding of violence against women through monitoring of their safety and the exchange of best practices. UN-Habitat had initiated a good governance programme to promote dialogue between communities and local authorities. It provided support for improved shelter delivery systems and housing rights as well as security of tenure, particularly for women, through its Global Land Tool Network. It had also launched a programme to empower urban women entrepreneurs through housing development, the protection of land rights and job creation, among other areas. The programme had resulted in the establishment of women's land access trusts, which mobilized women to form housing cooperatives and to save in order to benefit from various mortgage finance mechanisms. The trusts served as brokers between poor women in communities, the Government bureaucracy and financial institutions and enabled women to own land and housing. The programme was part of the Slum Upgrading Facility.

70. **Mr. Ndjonkou** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that despite major advances in fighting discrimination at work, the ILO report on discrimination entitled Equality at Work: Tackling the Challenges showed that the persistence of gender gaps in employment and pay was still cause for concern. The ILO action plan against discrimination included promoting gender equality through more integrated and coordinated global action, mainstreaming non-discrimination and equality into decent work country programmes and promoting better laws and their enforcement, among other measures. ILO supported the establishment of tripartite commissions on equal opportunities at the workplace. It had adopted a resolution on the promotion of gender equality, pay equity and maternity protection and provided training on pay equity through various programmes. Another area of discrimination for women related to their reproductive roles, as they faced hiring inequities and dismissal on the basis of actual or even potential pregnancy. A recent ILO paper entitled *Safe Maternity and the World of Work* highlighted priority areas for action at the workplace which would contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 5. The ILO approach to violence against women migrant workers was based on a strategy of promoting gender-sensitive migration policies and labour standards for migrant workers within the framework of the Decent Work Agenda. ILO was currently implementing a number of projects addressing trafficking in migrant women and forced labour.

71. Rural workers faced the highest incidence of poverty and vulnerability as they were often unorganized and lacked union protection. ILO worked with other international organizations to promote equality between women and men and gender integration in the cooperative movement and society. Cooperatives were able to address the feminization of poverty by providing opportunities to women to improve their economic situation as members or as employees of cooperatives.

72. **Ms. Filip** (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that the advancement of women was among the main areas of activity of IPU, as it was only by working collectively with parliaments that gender inequality and discrimination could be addressed. IPU put particular emphasis on enhancing the role of parliaments in the budgetary process and ensuring that the latter responded to the needs of both men and women. Parliamentary working groups and committees must be gender-balanced, economic statistics and other data gender must be disaggregated and women must be adequately represented within the civil service, especially the economic and finance departments.

73. Political processes would not be gender-sensitive unless there were more women in decision-making positions. IPU was continuing to support women in politics, including the organization of regional conferences for women parliamentarians and women in political decision-making positions. It would also continue to work with the Division for the Advancement of Women to organize a parliamentary day at the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

74. **Ms. Simovich** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in reference to the statement by the Observer for Palestine, said that Israel had full sympathy for the suffering of innocent Palestinian women. Brave leadership on the part of Palestinians in ending the terror was needed, however, if the suffering of women was to be alleviated. Palestinians must recognize that Israeli security was in their interest as well. It was Palestinians — not Israelis — who were killing their daughters and sisters in the name of family honour. Women and children had also been killed, during the violent clashes between Fatah and Hamas in the summer of 2007. According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, both sides had brought civilians into the conflict by preventing food from reaching them and firing at peaceful demonstrators. The houses of both parties to the conflict had been set on fire or targeted by projectiles in a policy of collective punishment to subdue the other side. Most of Gaza City had suffered from power outages and the interruption of basic services, threatening to bring about a humanitarian disaster. Gunmen had prevented ambulances from reaching the wounded or taking them to hospitals, which had increased the death toll. The situation described by the Centre confirmed that Palestinian women were victims first and foremost of their own society. In too many cases Palestinian women were forced by terrorist groups to carry out attacks, making them both victims and victimizers.

75. Her delegation was pleased to hear from the Observer for Palestine that the Palestinian people wanted peace. That statement was contradicted, however, by the more than 1,000 Qassam rockets fired by Palestinian terrorists from the Gaza Strip into Israel since June 2007. Nevertheless, in the light of recent regular meetings between the Israeli and Palestinian leadership, there was renewed hope for dialogue and reconciliation. The long and challenging road to peace must be travelled by Israeli and Palestinian women together.

76. **Mr. Abdeen** (Sudan) said that the draft resolution on the use of rape as an instrument of State policy being sponsored by the United States of America was clearly designed to target particular States, and that it had already been rejected by the African Group because of its ulterior agenda. His country welcomed international assistance from any States Members of the United Nations, including the United States, for its efforts to protect and empower women. But the United States needed to take care not to inflate claims about the numbers of women who benefited from the women's centres in Darfur. The Government of the Sudan was implementing numerous programmes to protect women throughout the country and in Darfur, in addition to the programmes being run by volunteer organizations, which he hoped would receive support from the United States and other States Members.

77. **Mr. Shinyo** (Japan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in reference to a statement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, said that it was unfortunate that this country's representative had touched on issues of the past which were not relevant to the item under discussion. His Government had acknowledged those issues on many occasions, including in the Pyongyang Declaration. Concerning the wartime comfort women, the Government had expressed its sincere apologies and remorse and acknowledged the involvement of the military authorities of the day.

78. The claim that 200,000 women from Korea and elsewhere in Asia had been forcibly drafted as comfort women, however, was entirely groundless. The issue of past history should be resolved through concrete consultations with a view to normalizing relations. Japan could not accept any attempt to divert attention from the ongoing problem of the abductions carried out the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or other serious human rights concerns by having the Committee take up an issue dealing with events which had occurred more than 60 years previously. It urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to implement the relevant human rights resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. It also drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (A/62/318), which referred to nine outstanding cases of enforced or involuntary disappearances and urged it to comply with General Assembly resolution 61/174 and to take steps to clarify those cases. It should resolve the abductions issue by allowing the surviving abductees to return to their

countries of origin. Based on the outcome of the working group on the normalization of relations between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the outcome document of the Six-Party Talks adopted in October 2007, Japan stood ready to consult with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on specific steps leading to normalization.

79. **Mr. Hijazi** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Palestinian people were undergoing a painful period in their national history which they were seeking to overcome with the restoration of national unity and achievement of their inalienable rights. His Government had explicitly condemned any violent and unlawful actions in various forums. It was making every effort to address the consequences of those actions for women to the extent of its ability, which had been limited by the destruction of Palestinian institutions in recent years as a result of the occupying Power's policies and practices.

80. Nevertheless, those actions constituted an internal Palestinian issue, and raising the issue in the current forum was an attempt to evade the topic at hand. His delegation had not delved into Israel's internal situation, where discrimination was rife, particularly against the Arab population, but had focused on Israel's unlawful actions as an occupying Power. It must be recognized that the Palestinian internal situation had occurred in the larger context of the prevailing Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of Israel's systematic violations of human rights of the Palestinian people, many amounting to war crimes.

81. Israel's violations of the rights of Palestinian people for more than 60 years far surpassed any of the unacceptable acts committed by Palestinian individuals or groups. Those violations determined the very existence of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel had repeatedly used the pretext of terrorism to justify unjustifiable acts. It was in fact terrorism exercised by the occupation regime which caused the suffering of the Palestinian people and necessitated international assistance. Such terrorism, resulting in death, loss of family, detention, displacement and poverty, was what Palestinian women had experienced during Israeli military occupation. They had been denied their most basic rights, including the right to life, security, housing and many others. Women felt terror when Israeli bulldozers demolished their houses while they were inside. Children in refugee camps felt terror when bullets and missiles rained down on their homes and playgrounds. Terror was indeed a threat to peace and stability in the region. Therefore, the Committee must work tirelessly to eliminate the terror which Palestinian women felt in their hearts. As the occupying Power, Israel must allow the Palestinian people to enjoy a life of dignity and security in which all their inalienable rights were respected.

82. **Mr. Jang** Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) expressed disappointment at the two-faced attitude of the Japanese delegation when it claimed that it was irrelevant to discuss the issue of comfort women before the Committee and that the figure of 200,000 was groundless. His Government had been raising the issue for many years, yet Japan had done nothing to resolve it to date. His Government had done everything it could to resolve the issue of abductions, including providing relevant material and witnesses. Japan, however, had refused to accept its sincerity. Japan had mentioned nine outstanding cases of abduction, whereas 8.4 million people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had been affected by Japanese abductions, including 200,000 comfort women and 1 million who had perished. He hoped that Japan would address the problem with sincerity and in good faith.

83. **Mr. Shinyo** (Japan) said that it did not bear repeating that his delegation recognized the issue of comfort women as one that severely injured the honour and dignity of women, as it had repeatedly and sincerely expressed its remorse for what had occurred during the War. Relations must be normalized between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Past issues could be addressed sincerely once negotiations had begun. Japan would normalize relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through the settlement of the unfortunate past and a comprehensive resolution of outstanding problems, including abductions, nuclear issues and past grievances. With regard to the abductions, the issue had not been settled at all. Among the 17 recognized abductees, only 5 had returned to Japan. It required a clear explanation on the part of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of the remaining 12. The evidence provided by it was not adequate. Moreover, it was not just a national question, as citizens of other countries such as Thailand and Romania had been abducted as well.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.